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PORTIONS OF BUTTE AND
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California State Senate

SENATOR
K. MAURICE JOHANNESSEN
CHAIR, SENATE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS

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JUL 29 1996

July 25, 1996

Mr. Douglas P. Wheeler, Secretary
Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Wheeler:

On Thursday, July 11, I joined with the large majority of the Legislature in voting in favor of SB 900, the Safe, Clean, Reliable, Water Supply Act. However, my vote did not come without reservations. I am deeply concerned about the current direction of water policy discussions and the potential impacts on the North.

Northern California historically has supported comprehensive undertakings to increase our state's water supply, provide flood control, develop hydropower facilities and to protect the environment. Both the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project were constructed with northern support despite serious concerns over the future operation of the projects. Northern representatives also were at the table during the unsuccessful efforts to develop the Peripheral Canal in 1982 and Governor Deukmejian's "through delta" plan in 1983. Both of these efforts ultimately were opposed when it became clear that northern needs were not adequately addressed and that the northern California's water supply would be at risk.

Now, northern leaders have been constructive players in the development of SB 900 and CALFED. However, despite this historic cooperation, I'm concerned that two key concerns are not being taken seriously enough in the current discussions. Those concerns are Area of Origin protections and additional storage.

The state and federal Area of Origin commitments to the Sacramento Valley which were developed in conjunction with the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project are based on sound legal reasoning and just policies. These commitments formed the basis for assuring that the projects would succeed in an integrated manner, serving the needs from one end of the Central Valley to the other. CALFED cannot ignore the assurances this region received and

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the special status to which it is entitled. To date, despite strong lobbying from northern representatives, CALFED has not made Area of Origin protections an integral part of the discussions. Protecting the Areas of Origin has been simply identified as an "emerging issue." The CALFED plan must fully affirm California's water rights priority system, respecting senior water rights such as those in the Sacramento Valley region. The affirmation must include the commitments in the Area of Origin law which ensure the Areas of Origin always have necessary water supplies to meet demands.

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Similarly, additional storage in the Sacramento Valley does not appear to be a priority in the discussions. Less than one percent of the funding in SB 900 is dedicated to investigating additional storage. While I'm pleased that the Sites Reservoir feasibility investigation will be able to proceed with SB 900 funding, a commitment of four million dollars out of nearly one billion is inadequate. Unfortunately, CALFED seems headed down the same path. While Sites is being discussed, storage facilities appear to be a lower priority than conveyance facilities. The three CALFED alternatives under continued evaluation all consider additional storage a variable, and even if included, the facilities are proposed for construction following conveyance. This is unacceptable. New storage must be made the priority.

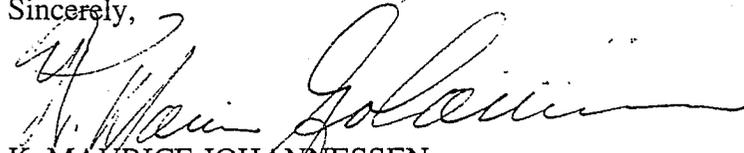
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In addition, there are two other aspects of CALFED which are worrisome. These are fish screens on agricultural diversions and retiring farmland. As you know, I represent the Sacramento Valley region where a majority of irrigation water is diverted through individual river diversions, many of which are still unscreened. If a policy is developed which mandates screening all diversions, protections must be included. The program must provide regulatory assurances to water users that the state of the art screens they install are not found obsolete soon after construction. The policy must ensure water users that once they have installed a screen, state and federal agencies will not require expensive upgrades or modifications. There also must be a fair share of cost for these projects, and, with nearly 2,000 unscreened diversions in the Bay-Delta watershed, projects must be prioritized.

Finally, I oppose retiring Sacramento Valley farmland as a means to meet CALFED goals in the Bay-Delta. In the Sacramento Valley, rice is the dominant crop, estimated at over 500,000 acres this year. Rice and other small grain crops provide significant seasonal wetlands habitat for numerous species of migrating waterfowl, shorebirds and other species, including over 25 special status species of wildlife. Taking important seasonal wetlands out of production will negatively affect wildlife and seriously impact the economic viability of the Sacramento Valley. Again, this cannot be allowed to happen.

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I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you and David Kennedy personally to discuss these concerns. I will be calling soon to set up an appointment.

Sincerely,



K. MAURICE JOHANNESSEN
Senator, Fourth District

KMJ:jwg

cc: David Kennedy
Lester Snow

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